

Antelope Valley Study The Big Picture



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***Antelope Valley Advisory Committee
Joint Antelope Valley Authority***

City of Lincoln
University of Nebraska–Lincoln
Lower Platte South Natural Resources District

The Big Picture—Antelope Valley Study

(Twenty Year Plan & Phase 1 Projects)

Imagine a beautifully landscaped waterway flowing along the east edge of downtown, with outdoor cafes, shops and a small, weekend band playing in the new linear park. Commuter and recreational bicyclists pedal along the waterway's attractive banks as part of a new downtown/university bike trail.

Over 800 homes and 200 businesses are now safe from the Antelope Creek designated 100-year flood event. Neighborhoods in Malone, Clinton and North Bottoms experience less drive through traffic.

Two blocks away, cars travel on a new landscaped boulevard along the east edge of the downtown/university area and then

"Lincoln can reinvest in the core of the city and grow at the edges.

The continuation of Lincoln's quality of life directly depends upon all its parts, including a center core area, remaining healthy, safe and vibrant,"

said Mayor Wesely.

pass over the railroad tracks near the Bob Devaney Center that used to block Lincoln traffic five out of 24 hours every day. The nine miles of new roadways provide newer and faster ways to travel from the historical city center to northern and northeastern Lincoln.

The City of Lincoln, University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), and the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District (LPSNRD) have engaged consultants, economists, planners, engineers and facilitators to consciously ask the community, "What do you want Lincoln, and particularly the 600 square-block historical core to look like in twenty years?" The result is the "Amended Draft Single Package." For four years, community members and representatives from the three governing entities have met in over 1,000 meetings to compose the Amended Draft Single Package.

"Many cities larger than Lincoln have failed to ask their constituents that important question," said Mayor Don Wesely. "The result in most instances has been a flight by many more affluent people to the suburban edge. With less economic reinvestment, blight and decay move into the center core with the

results being higher crime, gangs, and other big city problems. In addition, these larger city governments have had to spend valuable tax dollars on additional roads, water, sewer and other governmental services for citizens that fled to the outer edges."

Antelope Valley is all about asking the community whether Lincoln should follow the well traveled path experienced by most growing and bigger cities—a path full of blight in the core, fiscal problems and resulting despair and lack of hope for many of its citizens—or do we want to grow and keep a better balance between a healthy, safe and prosperous core and a vibrant and expanding community edge.

If the community agrees with this bold 15 to 20 year vision, the administrations of the three Antelope Valley partners are proposing the first set of strategies be built and implemented over the next six to 10 years. These first 10 strategies are referred to as the "Phase 1 Projects"—ranging from a new attractive waterway and two new major roadways to new and rehabilitated housing, commercial, recreational and neighborhood revitalization opportunities.

The Phase 1 Projects incorporate over two-thirds of the Amended Draft Single Package and come with a \$175 million dollar (1999 dollars) price tag. Major funding is expected to be shared by the Federal and State Governments, from special grants or entitlement accounts, with the balance funded by a series of fourteen other potential sources, including the three governmental partners, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, Railroad Safety Transportation District, and private investors, corporations and foundations. Last year, as "place holder plans," City officials incorporated most of the City's share of the Phase 1 Project in the City's one to six year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Other priority City projects are also funded in the CIP. City officials do not project any significant property tax increases because of the Phase 1 Projects.

"One of the primary benefits of several governments coordinating and carrying out an interrelated set of projects over a multi-year time frame is that each Partner contributes a relatively small portion of the overall Phase 1 Project investment of funds," said UNL Chancellor James Moeser. "In return, each Partner and its constituents receives a relatively high total return in public benefits."

"If we are successful at implementing these sets of strategies," added Moeser, "it will position the University of Nebraska-Lincoln well for decades to come. We have the opportunity to free 50-acres of the downtown campus from the serious threat of flooding and improve traffic flow in and around the campus. As a result the surrounding residential and business neighborhoods will be enhanced and strengthened," added the Chancellor. "That will set the stage to continue and improve all aspects of the University and attract the next generation of fine students and faculty who want to learn, live, research and teach in a high quality and dynamic educational community."

The final Phase 1 Project funding and implementation decisions are subject to the



Design charette of proposed performance pavilion east of waterway.

approval of the Lincoln City Council, University of Nebraska Board of Regents and the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District Board, as well as a variety of other federal, state and local agencies and entities. The most optimistic timetable for the first set of governmental approvals would be in the Fall of 2000, with possible construction beginning in 2001 and taking six to 10 years to complete.

While the time frame is aggressive and the Phase 1 Project, costs are large, the potential benefits are even greater and lead the three partnering administrations to recommend that the community go forward with the Phase 1 Projects approvals and implementation.

Approximately 1,300 homes, businesses, churches, and educational facilities are threatened in the designated 100-year floodplain of Antelope Creek. "Working together as a partnership, we can construct an attractive and affordable waterway that not only removes the serious flooding threat to lives and property but encourages private sector reinvestment, expands the tax base and generates new public recreational and trail opportunities in and around downtown and the University campus," stated Glenn Johnson, LPSNRD General Manager.

"Under the Antelope Valley Plan, the community consensus process told us that government must be more responsive, do more and yet be fiscally prudent with local tax dollars. We believe this proposed set of projects is responsive to the four-year community consensus process," said Johnson. "The community consensus process and the Antelope Valley Study have been guided by a citizen advisory committee that now numbers over 60. This broad representative advisory body of neighbors, businesses, nonprofit and governmental officials, has met 51 times for two hours over a four-year period. The community is indebted to the Advisory Committee's dedication and commitment to address and solve many, many complex and sticky issues and be able to offer a

consolidated and coordinated package that addresses storm water, transportation and community revitalization."

While various large and small community groups have met over 1,000 times during a four year period, it is not too late to get involved, ask questions and express opinions. "A potential series of projects of this magnitude raises many questions and concerns," stated the Mayor. "The three governmental Partners invite the public to review the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, visit the four scheduled open houses, tour the proposed project area, and attend and testify on the environmental impact at the August 1st and August 2nd Town Hall Meeting and Public Hearing."

"The vision is lofty and comes with a sizable cost," said the Mayor. "Still, the taxpayers' share is very reasonable considering the benefits the community will receive if we decide to go forward. In comparison, the doing nothing alternative is even more expensive and provides little benefit, as many bigger cities have unfortunately discovered."

"The continuation of Lincoln's quality of life directly depends upon all its parts, including a center core area, remaining healthy, safe and vibrant," said Mayor Wesely.

While the three partners are guardedly optimistic about project implementation, there are many important pieces that still need to come together before the proposed projects can become a "reality."

"This community has been blessed with a history of growth, while maintaining a high quality of life," said the Mayor. "We have seen time and time again that we all 'win' when this community works together in a selfless fashion and not at the expense of a particular group or geographic area. I am confident this spirit of cooperation and caring will be reflected as we go forward as a community and determine our readiness to implement the first set of Antelope Valley strategies as well as carry out other important community priorities."

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Highlights of the Phase 1 Projects

On December 10, 1999, Lincoln Mayor Don Wesely, UNL Chancellor James Moeser, and Lower Platte South Natural Resources District General Manager Glenn Johnson, announced their collective effort to seek governmental approvals of the first phase of proposed projects as outlined by the Amended Draft Single Package. The first set of 10 proposed projects, known as "Phase 1 Projects," would take approximately six to 10 years to construct at a cost of approximately \$175 million in today's dollars. Funding would come from a variety of federal, state, and local sources, with no significant tax increase projected. The proposed Phase 1 Projects and benefits include:

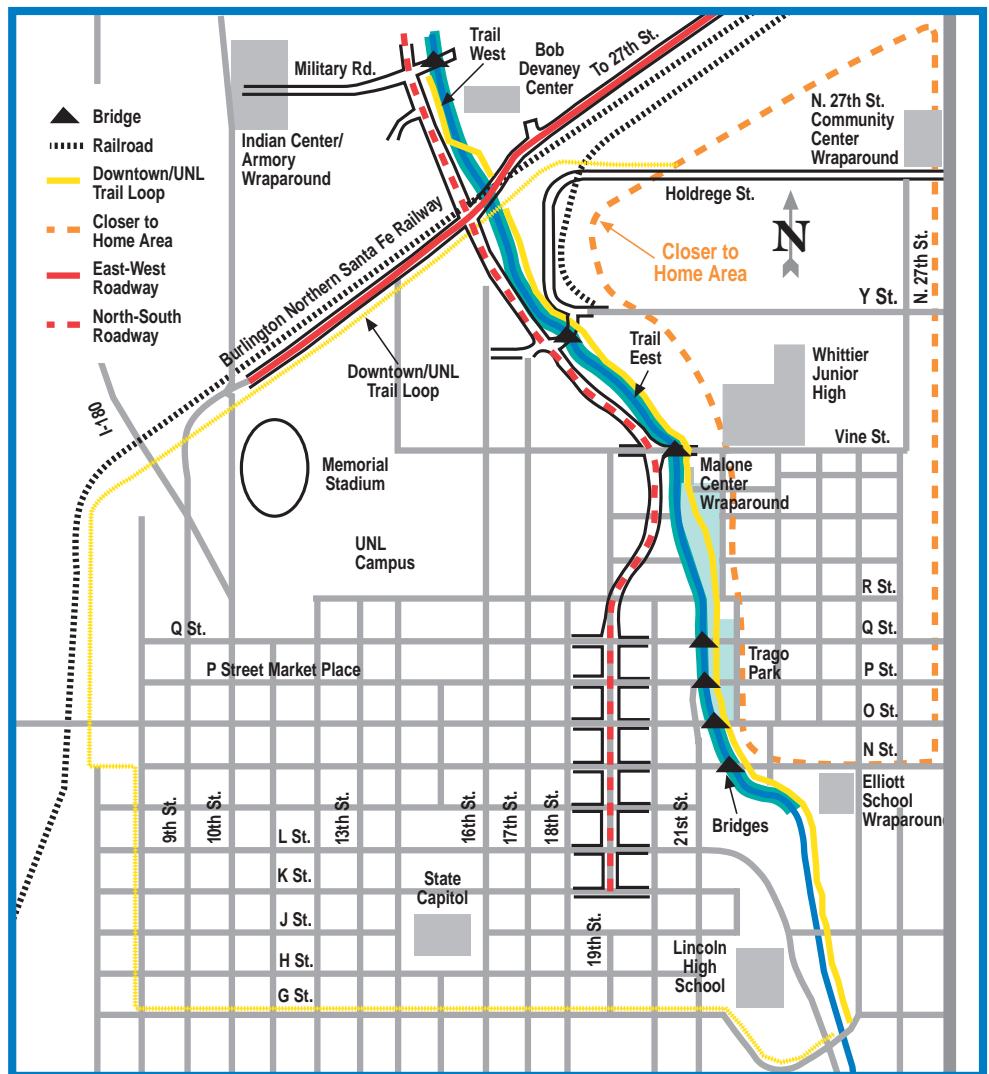
- **Construction of a landscaped Antelope Creek waterway from "J" Street to Salt Creek designed to reduce and confine the designated 100-year flood plain within the channel banks:** Antelope Creek would be restored within a one-half block wide linear park as an open waterway carrying flowing water north. The stream banks would gently rise as grassy areas and a bike trail from a point near "J" Street and Lewis Ball Fields, heading north, then turning northwest and paralleling 21st Street on the east side. The waterway would gradually turn westward one block beginning at "R" Street to the western border of Trago Park, turn due north, and continue to Vine Street where it would flow through the UNL campus and State Fair Park reconnect with Salt Creek.

- **Reduce flood damages and remove up to 1,000 structures and up to 50-acres of the UNL City Campus from the designated 100-year flood plain:** The new conveyance system would decrease water surface elevations and reduce and confine the designated 100-year flood plain within the channel banks which in turn would ease development restrictions on land currently within the designated 100-year flood plain. The South Street bridge over Antelope Creek would also be reconstructed and the S. 38th Street bridge would be removed to reduce significant conveyance constraints that currently contribute to flooding upstream of these bridges.

- **Development of a new park and recreation facilities;** **Expansion of Trago Park:** Creation of a new northeast park and recreation fields (33-acre) west of N. 33rd & Huntington Avenue and expansion of Trago Park to "O" Street.

- **Creation of a Downtown/UNL bike trail loop connecting six existing and proposed trails to provide direct access to Downtown and the UNL City Campus:** The proposed loop trail would parallel Antelope Creek east of downtown, border the UNL City Campus to the north, proceed south through the Haymarket, and turn west at "G" Street. The trail would complete its loop near Lincoln High School where it connects with Antelope Creek's existing trail.

- **New North-South roadway:** A new four lane North-South Roadway (located in a right-of-way for possible expansion to six lanes) would be provided in the 19th Street corridor from "K" Street along the east side of the UNL City Campus, curving along the east side of UNL's Beadle Center, continuing north and west to bridge over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) mainline railway west of the Bob Devaney Center, and connecting to 14th Street near Military Road. The North-South Roadway would include an extra wide



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landscaped median in Downtown.

- **New East-West roadway:** A new four lane East-West Roadway would extend from 10th and Avery Streets eastward, first on the south side of the BNSF mainline railway intersecting with the North-South Roadway above grade at a signaled intersection. After the North-South Roadway intersection, expanded to six lanes from four lanes, the East-West Roadway would bridge over the BNSF Railway and parallel the BNSF mainline tracks on the north side to North 27th Street.

- **Elimination of dangerous railroad/street intersections with BNSF mainline:** Grade crossings of mainline railway tracks that block sidewalks and roadways approximately five hours a day will be closed at N. 14th Street and N. 17th Street. They will be replaced by a pedestrian underpass and a new four

way road overpass bridge that is part of the new North-South Roadway and East-West Roadway.

- **Proposed downtown supermarket, potential expansion of the downtown area east of 17th Street to the new waterway:** New private sector development opportunities for a downtown supermarket near 19th and "O" Streets, an expansion of Market Place ("P" Street) connecting Lincoln's two historic train stations, and other new retailing, office and housing opportunities between 17th Street and the new waterway near 22nd Street.

- **"Closer to Home" Strategies to improve the core neighborhoods:** Improved housing opportunities and other residential and commercial revitalization strategies, are included, along with alley rocking and paving, sidewalk and street repairs, street lighting, traffic calming, tree removal and replanting, etc. With the reduction of flood damages, the threat to human life and also the reduction and confinement of the designated 100-year flood plain within the channel bank; reinvestment will increase throughout the core area. Viable homes would be acquired as part of the waterway and roadway and would be relocated to fill in vacant lots.

- **Expansion of wrap-around community centers:** Expand community, neighborhood and health services of existing facilities at locations such as 27th & Holdrege St., Elliott School, Clyde T. Malone Community Center and the Armory/Indian Center. Wrap-around centers create efficiencies by having several agencies locate and work together to provide community services at a single location.

During the last two years, a preliminary functional design has been developed for the proposed Phase 1 Projects and the environmental documentation prepared.

Potential Phase 1 Benefits

- Reduce flood damages and the threat to human life along Antelope Creek by constructing two miles of an attractive open waterway that will remove over 800 dwelling units, 200 businesses and 50-acres of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln City Campus from the current designated 100-year flood plain.
- Lessen congestion and improved travel times by constructing 6 miles of new roadways and 11 new or replacement bridges.
- Increase neighborhood revitalization in the Downtown Neighborhood, Malone, Clinton, Hartley, Woods Park,

North Bottoms, East Campus and University Place Community Organization by increasing and improving housing stock, neighborhood support services, alleys, sidewalks and landscape.

- Strengthen downtown with a new supermarket, new foot print for large and small companies and specialized retail areas.
- Reduce inner city blighting factors.
- Encourage citizens to live, work and play in the historical city center so there are quality alternatives to the city edge, reducing the need to provide costly and duplicative public services.